Sustainability and Business 101

Infusing Sustainability into an Introduction to Business class at Olympic College

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Characteristics of Business101

• Meets social science general education requirements, program prerequisites
• A wide variety of students take the class – has to be relevant for future business leaders, as well as employees and consumers
• Broad overview of business - covers a lot of subject matter quickly
• Course introduces students to different stakeholder perspectives for assessing business decisions
• Textbook* includes “Seeking Sustainability” examples
• Honest - business activities have caused environmental and social justice issues
• Hopeful - business is a source of innovations and solutions

*Understanding Business, 11ed, Nickels, McHugh, & McHugh, McGraw Hill Education
Introducing Sustainability into Business 101

- **In-class discussions**
  - Discuss different stakeholder perspectives and expectations about a business
  - Business – A source of problems, a source of hope
    - Develop list of ways business has contributed to the world’s problems
    - Develop list of ways business can solve the world’s problems

- **Short projects**
  - Analyze the supply chain for a product (or one part of a product) from raw material to end of life disposal.
    - Identify each intermediary in the supply chain.
    - Identify any social justice or environmental issues that may be impacted by different functions in the supply chain.
Stakeholder Perspectives and Expectations

• Stockholders – profitable, growth, no scandals
• Customers – quality and safe products, fair price
• Employees – fair wages, safe and secure working conditions
• Vendors – healthy business growth, on-time payments
• Community members – positive contribution to community well-being
• Politicians – successful business, local job growth
• Government – pays taxes, compliant with the law
Business – A source of problems, a source of hope

Business has contributed to the world’s problems
• Business processes lead to air, water, ground pollution
• Resource abuse, destruction of the environment, deforestation
• Garbage from packaging, throw-away goods, e-waste
• Overconsumption
• Climate change – greenhouse gas emissions
• Social issues – create haves and have-nots, state of dissatisfaction, false promises, job loss through technology
• Unethical practices, community and investor rip-offs
Business – A source of problems, a source of hope

Business can help to solve the world’s problems
• Research and develop eco-friendly resources, products, packaging
• Restore natural resources that have been destroyed
• Recycle and reuse waste
• Pay fair wages
• Employers can invest in employees with opportunities and education to develop their career
• Use technology to solve problems - Hydro-energy, windmills
• Communicate with honesty and transparency
• Be more responsible for long-term community impacts – Corporate Social Responsibility

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Analyze product supply chain - from raw material to end of life disposal

Student discoveries and commitments to change

- Cosmetology student who discovered toxic ingredients in beauty products and the results of animal testing vowed to research all beauty products she would use in the future
- Computer student who learned about living conditions in communities where computers are dumped researched companies with product return systems, such as Hewlett-Packard
- Group of students who watched video about Great Pacific Garbage Patch committed to stop drinking water from plastic bottles